

Which Will It Be: America or Political Socialism?

By Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler

THE most pressing question that now confronts the American people, the question that underlies and conditions all problems of reconstruction and of advance as we pass from war times to the normal times of peace, is whether we shall go forward by preserving those American principles and American traditions that have already served us so well, or whether we shall abandon those principles and traditions and substitute for them a state built, not upon the civil liberty of the individual, but upon the plenary power of organized government.

Not Socialism

Those whose eyes are turned toward a government of the latter type are designated in a general way as Socialists. The words socialism and Socialist, though less than a century old, have lately become very common among us, and are so loosely and so variously used as to make it difficult to think clearly regarding the ideas for which they stand. Socialism, in the large, general and vague sense of the word, means simply social reform. In that sense, every intelligent and forward stepping man or woman is a Socialist. All of us who are in our right minds are anxious to improve social conditions, to better the public health, to decrease the hours and the severity of labor, to increase the rewards and to add to the satisfaction of those who do the hard manual work of the world; to increase and make secure provision against illness, unemployment and indigent old age; to use the power of public taxation to build roads, to multiply schoolhouses, to aid with information and guidance those who farm and those who mine; to bring together collections of books, of objects of beauty and of art for the information and the pleasure of the great body of the people; to improve the conditions of housing in large cities, and to see to it that such essentials of life as water, light and transportation are furnished, of the best quality and at the lowest practicable cost. If by socialism be meant that the individual must not live for himself alone, but must use his powers, his capacities and his gains for the benefit of his community and his fellows, then every American and every Christian is a Socialist, for these are fundamental to American life and Christian teaching. All this, however, is social reform, not socialism.

Socialism, in the strict and scientific sense of the word, is, however, something quite different from this. Socialism involves not social reform but political and social revolution. It is the name for a definite public policy which rests upon certain historical and economic assumptions, all of which have been proved to be false, and it proceeds to very drastic and far-reaching conclusions, all of which are in flat contradiction to American policy and American faith. The assumptions of socialism are these:

First, that all of man's efforts, both past and present, are to be interpreted and explained in terms of his desire for wealth and of the processes which lead to the satisfaction of that desire. This assumption excludes at once all moral, religious and unselfish considerations from history and from life and makes of man nothing but a gain-seeking animal preying upon his kind wherever he can lay hands upon him. There have been, and there doubtless are, many individuals of this type; but to suppose that the whole human race can be brought under such a description is an outrageous travesty on history, on morals and on religion. This assumption would reduce all human history to the product of blind gain-seeking forces and would exclude from it both moral effort and moral purpose. Under such a theory no man would make any sacrifice for liberty or for love, but only for gain. All human experience contradicts so cruel and so heartless an assumption.

Class Struggle

Second, that in the struggle for wealth men are divided into "permanent" classes—those who employ and those who labor—and that between these classes there is and should be a class struggle or class war, to be carried on to the bitter end, until those who labor not only conquer those who employ, but exclude them from any place in the community.

This doctrine of class struggle is the savage teaching of Karl Marx, a man whose consuming passion was hate. It is the extreme form of the doctrines of Karl Marx which Lenin and Trotsky have been applying in Russia for a year and a half past with such terrible results. In consequence, that once great country of boundless possibilities is now as helpless as a child, and it lies, for

the moment, in social, economic and moral ruin, and is relapsing into barbarism. Its reorganized schools now devote part of each day to instruction in atheism and to removing any lingering traces of what used to be proudly called civilization. Russia has lost, happily, the cruel and tyrannous Czar who ruled over it, but unhappily it has gained in his stead a small group of violent and equally cruel autocrats whose operations make those of the Czar seem like child's play. For the first time in history, on a stage which the whole world can witness, and on an immense scale, the doctrines and theories of Karl Marx are being put to the test of practical application. No one not himself blinded by hate or by ignorance can be in any doubt as to the lesson which the world has quickly learned from the untold sufferings of Russia.

This doctrine of permanent economic classes and of a class struggle is the absolute contradiction of democracy. It denies a common citizenship and an equality of rights and privileges in order to set up a privileged and an exploiting class by sheer force and terrorism. Here in America we know full well that there are no permanent and conflicting economic classes, for the wage worker of to-day is the employer of a few years hence. With us the son of the farmer may be the leader of a learned profession in a distant city, and he who begins self-support as signalman or telegraph operator may easily find himself in a few short years the directing head of a great railway system. Not long ago public attention was called to the fact that no fewer than nineteen of the men who then directed the great transportation systems of the United States had in every case begun their careers as wage workers in the service of one or another of the railway companies.

America Refutes

We know, too, that the fundamental doctrine of American citizenship absolutely excludes the notion that men gain or lose anything by reason of their occupation. Here every man and woman stands on a level of political equality, and the vote of the man of wealth is no more potent than the vote of the man who at the moment may be seeking employment. In the socialist state, permanent economic classes with differing and opposing rights and privileges are fundamental. From the democratic state, on the other hand, they are excluded. Robert Burns was a true poet of democracy when he sang:

"A man's a man for a' that."
Third, that in the course of economic development the rich are getting steadily richer and steadily

fewer, while the poor are getting steadily poorer and steadily more numerous. This assumption is easily disposed of by the facts, which show that, as applied to America, these two statements are absolutely false.

Ours is a land in which more than 20,000,000 men, women and children have just now subscribed to Liberty bonds.

It is a land with more than 18,000,000 dwellings, occupied by about 21,000,000 families.

It is a land in which fully 6,000,000 families own their own homes without encumbrance, while 3,000,000 own their homes subject to mortgage.

It is a land in which more than 12,000,000 persons are depositors in mutual, stock, or postal savings banks, with total deposits amounting to more than \$6,500,000,000.

It is a land in which there are nearly 6,500,000 farms, having a value, including their buildings and equipments, of more than \$41,000,000, and yielding an annual product of a value of more than \$8,500,000,000.

It is a land with more than 265,000 miles of railway in operation, carrying in a year more than 1,000,000,000 individual passengers and more than 2,225,000,000 tons of freight.

It is a land in which schools for the people are maintained at a total expenditure of nearly \$650,000,000, with an attendance of more than 20,000,000 children.

It is a land in which there are more than 3,000 public libraries, having on their shelves more than 75,000,000 volumes for the instruction and inspiration of the people.

It is a land whose total wealth is now not less than \$225,000,000,000 and in which the distribution of that wealth is steadily becoming more equitable and more satisfactory under the operation of the forces and principles that have guided American life so long and so well.

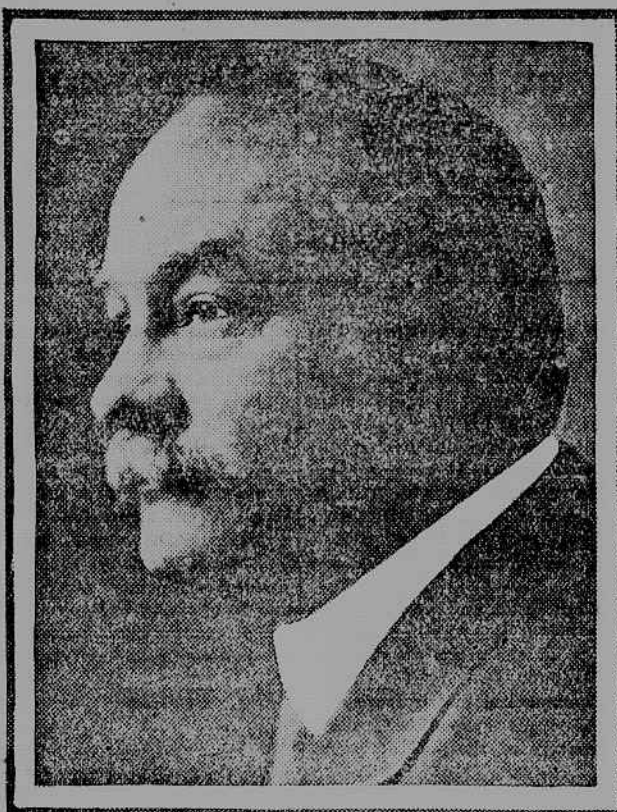
Who is it that has the temerity to wish to undermine the foundations of so noble and so inviting a political and social structure as this?

Forty years ago and more, when the doctrine of Socialism was systematically put forward by Karl Marx, it was quickly seized upon by those in Germany and in every other European land who were discontented with existing forms of government and of social organization and was converted by them into a political programme. That programme, which was to all intents and purposes made in Germany, although written in London, contradicts Americanism and democracy at every point. It calls, not for any programme of social reform in accordance with American principles and American ideals, but for a programme of collective control over the individual life, the individual occu-

pation and the individual reward that would destroy America absolutely. It would erect upon the ruins of our democracy an autocratic state in which the tyranny of a temporary or class majority would take the place once held by the tyranny of an hereditary monarch or an hereditary ruling class. Its most extreme exponents have not hesitated to announce themselves, as did Bakunin fifty years ago, as apostles of universal destruction.

Socialism in America

As yet the number of formal adherents of the Socialist party in the United States is not large, but the theories and teachings of socialism are being eagerly and systematically spread among us. Many schools and colleges and many pulpits are either unconscious or willful agents in this work. In the election of 1916 the Socialist party of the United States obtained almost exactly 3.3 per cent of the total vote. It is probable that by formally adopting the international policy of the Russian Bolsheviks the Socialist party has alienated enough of its former supporters to reduce its probable vote to-day to less than 2 per cent of the total. Small as this number is, it represents organization and activity out of all proportion to its size. There should be no mistake about its programme. It openly calls our Constitution dishonest. It denounces the fathers of our country as grafters, as crooks, as men of mediocre



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Intelligence and as attorneys of the capitalist class. In the making and building of America the Socialist can see nothing of idealism, nothing of sacrifice, nothing of high principle, nothing of love of liberty, nothing of aspiration for a finer and a freer manhood. The Socialist party platform of 1912 explicitly demanded not only the usual collectivist and communist policies, but also the abolition of the United States Senate and of the veto power of the President; the abolition of all Federal courts, except the United States Supreme Court and the election of all judges for short terms; the abolition of the power of the Supreme Court of the United States to pass upon the constitutionality of legislative acts, and a revision of the Constitution of the United States.

The Socialist party is in particular antagonism to the courts, and the reason is easy to state. Under our American system the courts are established to protect civil liberty from passion, from mob control and from improper assumption of power by public authorities and public agents. All this is most distasteful to the orthodox Socialist. He wishes to lay the hand of force upon civil liberty and to destroy it for a despotism of his own making. The courts of justice are an obstacle in his way.

The sinister fact never to be forgotten, about this party and its programme is that they are in essence and of necessity unpatriotic and un-American. Republicans and

Democrats differ sharply as to public policy, but they both accept the principles of the Constitution and endeavor to apply and improve them each in their own way. Neither Republicans nor Democrats would change the form of government under which we live. The Socialist party, on the other hand, openly declares its purpose to wreck the present form of government, to undo all the work that has been accomplished for 150 years and to bring to an end the greatest experiment in republicanism and the greatest achievement in social and political organization that the world has ever seen. Let there be no mistake about the definiteness of this issue. America's existence is challenged.

Internationalism

Orthodox Socialists are internationalists of a special kind. They are really not internationalists at all, but rather anti-nationalists. They are not in favor of closer, more kindly and more constructive international relations as a means toward justice and the security of the world, but they desire that sort of internationalism which shall extend class consciousness, class cooperation and the class struggle beyond the boundaries of existing nations and so assist in breaking down those boundaries. This is why the logical orthodox Socialist is of necessity unpatriotic. He does not believe in patriotism, because he regards it as an obstacle to the further extension of the successful class struggle and of class rule. Happily, we have seen in our recent experience that men may be sincere believers in many of the tenets of socialism and yet remain patriotic and loyal Americans. Such men as Russell, Walling, Spargo and Montague have illustrated this fact. Unfortunately these men have been but a small minority in the Socialist party or group and they have succeeded from it. Orthodox Socialists as a body cannot be loyal and devoted Americans for the simple reason that American institutions and American ideals lie straight across the path which they would like to pursue.

This distinction between a true and a false internationalism is to be taken into account and clearly reckoned with in shaping the policies of the world. Just as the family relation enriches and strengthens the individual, and just as the community relation enriches and strengthens the family, and just as the state relation enriches and strengthens the community, and just as the national relation enriches and strengthens the state, so will a true international relationship enrich and strengthen every nation that enters into it. Any plan for a society of nations that would de-

stroy national initiative, national responsibility and national pride would be merely a straitjacket upon human progress. The true and wise society of nations will be one built out of nations that are stronger, more resourceful and more patriotic because of their new association and their new opportunities for world service.

Signs are not wanting that the advocates of socialism think it will be easier and quicker to gain ground in the United States by the indirect method of involving us in a false international policy than by the direct method of attempting to secure control of the machinery of government through the suffrage. This explains why Socialists, and those who at heart sympathize with them without openly assuming their name, are so anxious that Lenin and Trotsky shall be formally recognized as heads of a government with which civilized and honorable men may have relations, and that the German people should, so far as possible, be saved from the consequences of their public crime and their military defeat. If Americans could only be led to give up their historic patriotism for a humanitarian sentimentalism the battle of the Socialists would be half won. This is why it behooves us to watch with anxious care each step that our government proposes to take in relation to international policy. If it is proposed to build a world of strong, independent, self-conscious nations, with close and friendly international relations for the preservation of the world's peace, well and good. But if it is proposed to weaken or destroy nations in order to build a world in which historic nations shall play but an insignificant part, and in which patriotism and love of country shall disappear, then Americans should oppose such a policy at every step and with the utmost vigor.

America Worth Saving

That which the American of to-day opposes to Socialist autocracy is not the crude competitive individualism of the old-fashioned economist, but cooperative individualism with a moral purpose. It must not be forgotten that on the existence of private capital—which is only another name for private savings—depend the virtues of thrift, of liberality and of sacrifice. The observation that liberality consists in the use which is made of property is as old as Aristotle.

Under modern conditions private capital is much more highly and more freely cooperative than any system of Socialist organization could possibly be. The corporation, with its provision for the limited liability of the individual participant, is only a means of bringing about

the cooperation of many individuals for a common cause, and is one of the greatest and most beneficent developments of the past century. It links together in a common enterprise the joint labors or joint savings of hundreds, thousands, even tens of thousands, of men and women, who to that extent are organized as a single economic unit interested in promoting efficient production and entitled to divide among themselves the common product. Under the system of private capital all this individual cooperation is free. Under any Socialist system, whatever cooperation existed would be imposed by rule and enforced by the power of the majority or ruling group. Under the system of private capital the individual cooperating, whether investor or workman, comes and goes as he chooses. He is free to make what disposition he will of his own savings or of his own labor. Under any Socialist system all this would be regulated for him and directed by public authority. His freedom would be wholly gone.

America is worth saving, not only as a land in which men and women may be free and increasingly prosperous, but as a land and a government under which character can be built, individual capacity given opportunity for free exercise, and cooperation on the widest scale promoted not only for private advantage but for the public good. As men become increasingly moral and increasingly intelligent, their personal activities will be increasingly impressed with a public interest. Their citizenship will not exhaust itself in the formal exercise of political rights or in merely political activity. It will show itself in ways that are economic, social and ethical. Throughout this land there are thousands, hundreds of thousands of men and women who illustrate this fact. Neither America nor mankind in general is likely to attain absolute perfection; but under the influence and guidance of those principles and ideals which are historically and truly American there is every reason to believe that each succeeding generation will see new and increasing progress toward the goal of greater human happiness and greater human satisfaction.

The sure mark of the reactionary is unwillingness to make use of the teachings of past experience, or to learn the lessons of history and apply them to the problems of to-day. The real reactionary, who is always an egoist, insists that his own feelings, his own desires, his own ambitions, take precedence over anything that all the rest of mankind may have said or done or recorded. He wishes to start life all over again in a Garden of Eden of his own, with a private serpent and a private apple. The true progressive, on the other hand, is he who carefully reads history and carefully examines the experience of mankind in order to see what lessons have already been learned, what mistakes need not be repeated and what principles of organization and conduct have established themselves as sound and beneficent.

Recalling a Call on Whitman

By E. N. Vallandigham

WHEN I called on Walt Whitman in the middle '70s of the last century and in the middle fifties of his age, I ought to have known better. Youth is brash, however, and I had the support and suggestion of a comrade no older than I. We found the poet seated in the ground floor front room of the little wooden house in Camden, N. J., the first, I believe, that he occupied in that strange retreat. Bright sunlight fell in at the window upon the figure of Whitman as he sat in his shirt-sleeves, surrounded by newly printed copies of his own works.

Whitman was then well under sixty, but to the eyes of youth he looked an old man, and, indeed, he was far older in appearance than his years warranted, with hair deeply grayed and face lined, though the complexion was clear and ruddy. He was then recovering from his paralytic stroke of about three years before. As he sat during the whole of our visit I cannot say how well able he was to move about, but he had full control of hands and arms and his voice was strong, his look vigorous and his eyes were clear and lively. As ever, he was neat in dress and agreeably unconventional. My recollection is that he did not then wear the long beard that, whitened with years, made his true old age venerable and distinguished. Even then the figure was ample, as of a man much above the common height and breadth.

The room was of good size and cheerful with sunshine. It was simply, though comfortably, furnished. On the wall was an oil portrait of the poet, far from flattering, and done, I should say, some years before, as it showed him considerably younger in aspect, though with hair and beard somewhat grizzled. I recall that it struck me as showing a far from poetic countenance, for the forehead seemed low and the expression was not especially attractive. After all these years I cannot shake off the notion that the portrait was by a painter who failed to seize the inner man and put him upon canvas. Years after I lived at the Fellowship Club, opposite the Little Church Round the

Corner, where hung John W. Alexander's much later portrait of Whitman, showing him venerable and beautiful, with abundant white hair, the snowy adornment of his silken beard, the singular clear glance of the blue-gray eyes and the serene countenance out of which had been utterly refined that faint suggestion of the Satyr which some persons saw in his younger face.

Whitman was occupied in pasting a portrait of himself as frontispiece to many copies of his book, then recently published—I think probably the volume entitled "Two Rivulets," issued in 1875. I understood that most of these copies were to be sent to friends and brother poets in this country and abroad. Possibly many were for those persons who were aiding Whitman with money for his daily living and for the publication of the book itself. Not yet was he surrounded with the group of admirers that burned incense under his rose in later years, nor had the pilgrimage of visitors from abroad begun. I fancy, for in answer to my tactless question as to distinguished callers he said, perhaps somewhat testily, that he had none such. As a matter of fact, he was still an object of ridicule to smart parodists, and had won recognition from comparatively few persons in this country, though he had impressed his fellow poets abroad, as he had Emerson, though not Lowell. "No, no," he wrote Lowell to Eliot Norton from Dresden about twenty years before in comment on Norton's report touching "Leaves of Grass," and in the whole two volumes of the Lowell letters is no other reference to Whitman.

We youngsters, recently out of college, and full of ill digested good reading, talked with Whitman of books and writers, and to our talk he responded with patient good nature. I fear we asked impertinent questions, but Whitman kept on with his pastebush industry in the sunlight, and possibly did not listen to our chatter. Once I got a rise out of him. We had come to speak of him as "wholesome," a term snatched from my reading of older critics. At the word Whitman paused in his manual task, and peering at me with keen eyes, said, in a tone almost of challenge: "You call him wholesome?" This question silenced me, and it is the sole implication

of literary judgment that I fetched away from the interview. Only once afterward I saw the poet, perhaps in 1883 or 1884, by which time he had been definitely accepted by a part of literary Philadelphia, and I believe even admitted to the homes of the Concord folk from which the women of the local poets and philosophers had once excluded him. He was now able to move about on his own legs, and was a not unfamiliar figure on the streets of Philadelphia. He comes back to my vision as a tall old man, grave, venerable, slow moving in the crowd of Chestnut Street, doubtless making his way downward to the Camden ferry on his homeward journey to the little wooden house.

Sentry Duty

(Dedicated to the watchers on the Rhine.)

By Archie Austin Coates

Three hundred and fifty-nine steps down,
And just as many slowly counted back;
And the trees in the distance stand sharp
Against the trees and the night.
Three hundred and fifty-nine steps down,
I've counted them slowly a hundred times,
With the gun in the curve of my shoulder
And empty eyes staring into the dark.
Somewhere back is a little knoll.
No more than ten steps across,
And every time I come to it I think
Of that little corner in Nebraska
Where you are waiting, and wondering of me.
Three hundred and fifty-nine . . .
What a world of stars there are to-night!

By Corporal Arthur E. Curtis, A. E. F., France

IN my humble, non-commissioned opinion, there has been too much said by the press in the United States about what our soldiers are like when they return from France. Therefore, I am going to say a little more—on the same principle a doctor stands when he injects a toxic into a system already suffering from some poison.

There still are a million of us existing over here in the backyards and barnyards of France and "our folk,"

business men and reformers, may like to be forewarned of the truth about us. The truth about the change in the men of our army is startling. It is: there is no change. I am speaking of the mass, of course, and the rule is sworn to by exceptions which will be noticeable from time to time in individual cases. Most of the "talk and type" applied to the "transformation" in the characters and ideals of the men who have been over here make both officers and "bucks" of the A. E. F. either snicker or sweat.

Do our people back there behind the Statue of Liberty believe that uniform, wStatue of Liberty believe that the uniform, a few fights and a few months in of cosmic incubator, which has hatched our men out as a brand-new breed of the genus homo? If so, I hasten to assure them that such is far from the fact. You'll find your Joes and Johns and Harrys essentially the same old boys, and the million of us over here want you to know it. The only effects of the experience which may be temporarily noticeable to parents, employers and sweethearts will be the minor ones of an acquired laziness and discontent.

A few will feel that the old harness never will fit them again; they'll find new jobs or settle back into the old line, and time will act as a collar-pad to make the old harness serve. The laziness—resulting from the ready-made living (such as it is) issued to the soldier by the government, and from the fact that in the army others are supposed to do his thinking for him—will yield to a capacious stomach, latent ambition or a prospective bride. But the whole crop of apparent new wrinkles in the epidermis of the soldier's character will, in general, I believe, be smoothed out by a quick and easy adjustment from the irresponsible and migratory existence of the army to the responsibilities and stationary qualities of civil life. In other words, the boys are not essentially changed.

Back in the camp there are so many sleeping,
And never a one to look at the stars,
Shining all alone up there, just for me!
A dry limb cracks . . .
We used to have stars in Nebraska—
I remember seeing three brave ones twinkling
Just inside the corner of the window sash
Below my bed.
And there were other stars that hung beneath your eyes
When I went to the train;
You thought that they were tears—I think that all those stars up there above
Are tears for a million men who sleep in camps . . .
I wish I could see my three big stars, from here,
Hanging over that little corner in Nebraska
Waiting . . . bravely . . .
Three hundred and fifty-nine steps back . . . !

The A. E. F. Speaks for Itself

The returned soldier will not go deeper into government nor politics than he did before the war; the returned officer will. The plain soldier has no ambitions along army or government lines, for the average experience over here discourages ambition in the enlisted man. The officer has been given authority, often whether or not he deserved it. He has had personal servants and the best available living conditions. He will go after more of this good stuff in the army or in politics. To the officer the army, the government, represent personal success. To the plain soldier or "non-com" the army represents a dead weight upon him which all but exterminates his individuality. That's one reason why home looks so sweet and the old job so good to the men of the A. E. F. And that's why most of the enthusiasm about the army expressed when we're all "back over" will be manifested by former officers.

The average discharged soldier soon will become a normal citizen of his former type, plus the confidence gained from having done his duty because he could not avoid doing it. "His not to ask the reason why," and he didn't. He did what he wanted to do and ate, loafed, drank vin blanc and flirted in France, then got home as soon as he could.

Those things are not going to mean any real change in the Johns and Joes and Harrys. Neither is the fact that most of them carry home with them a distorted and uncomplimentary opinion of France, and particularly of French women (due to living in France's backyards and barnyards and to coming in contact, naturally under the conditions, with the most undesirable class of French women). Neither are the boys going to be permanently affected in "soul" by the fact that they have, as a rule, drunk more wine and cognac than they ever saw before, that they smoke two cigarettes where they puffed one before, that they have acquired a vulgar and hair-triggered vocabulary of cuss words, and that they have discarded creed and witnessed genuine religion.

Yes, your same old boys are returning home, older and wiser by so many months and vivid experiences, and better by just the natural increase in appreciation of all things fair and square and comfortable and tender. But, for heaven's sake, don't expect us to come back completely renovated and reconstructed nor transformed into gods disguised in uniforms of olive drab.

Upon all this the progressive builds a new and consistent structure to meet the needs of to-day in the light of the experience of yesterday. He does not find it necessary to burn his own fingers in order to ascertain whether fire is hot.

"Will Be Saved"

America will be saved, not by those who have only contempt and despite for her founders and her history, but by those who look with respect and reverence upon the great series of happenings extending from the voyage of the Mayflower to the achievements of the American armies on the soil of France and upon that long succession of statesmen, orators, men of letters and men of affairs who have themselves been both the product and the highest promise of American life and American opportunity. The Declaration of Independence rings as true to-day as it did in 1776. The Constitution remains the surest and safest foundation for a free government that the wit of man has yet devised. Faithful adherence to these strong and enduring foundations and a high purpose to apply the fundamental principles of American life with sympathy and open-mindedness to each new problem that presents itself will give us a people increasingly prosperous, increasingly happy and increasingly secure.

Just as soon as the American people, with their quick intelligence and alert apprehension, understand the difference between social reform and political socialism, and the distinction between internationalism that is false and destructive of patriotism and internationalism that is true and full of appeal to every patriot, they will stamp political socialism, together with all its subtle and half-conscious approximations and imitations under foot as something alien to our free American life. They will prefer to save America.